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SUBJECT: BASSOLE SEEKS ASSISTANCE IN KEEPING THE DOHA TALKS ALIVE

REF: A) KHARTOUM 372

¶1. (SBU) Summary: UN/AU Joint Chief Mediator Djibril Bassole noted that the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) refused further dialogue with the Government of Sudan (GoS) because of the INGO expulsion, and proposed that JEM might participate in the Doha talks if the opportunity to discuss humanitarian issues was provided. He urged SE Gration to help him keep the talks alive by supporting this initiative, and maintaining constructive engagement with the GOS. He also asked the SE to continue to encourage JEM and other factions to commit to Doha, most notably Minni Minnawi, who he believes ought to participate in the talks as a member of the Government of National Unity (GNU). SE Gration pledged his assistance to Bassole and agreed to consider traveling to Doha before the end of the month in a show of support, following a series of regional consultations. End Summary.

PROPOSAL FOR GOS-JEM MEETING IN DOHA ON HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

¶2. (SBU) On April 3, Presidential Special Envoy to Sudan Scott Gration, USSES Shortly, CDA Fernandez and emboffs met with UN/AU Joint Chief Mediator Djibril Bassole, Deputy Mediator Azouz Ennifar, JMST Senior Advisor Kenneth Gluck and other members of the Joint Mediation Support Team (JMST) to discuss a way forward in the stalled Darfur peace process. Bassole stated that he recognizes an urgent need to focus the mediation on humanitarian relief, following the March 5 expulsion of the 13 INGOs. As a result, he has proposed inviting the GOS and JEM to Doha to discuss humanitarian issues, he said, and hoped that such a meeting would in the process re-ignite the Doha talks. "We need to keep Doha alive, especially in the wake of the Arab League Summit there," he said, noting that the Summit was off-putting to JEM, which chafed at the closeness exhibited there between President Bashir and the Qatari Emir. "My biggest concern is that if JEM refuses to return (to Doha) we will have nowhere to turn to as the GNU will refuse to go anywhere else."

NEED FOR BROADER STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN DOHA

¶3. (SBU) Asked for his impressions on the Doha process, Bassole stated that he believed Qatari State Minister Ali Mahmoud was doing "a fantastic job" in engaging parties to the mediation, and noted the Emir was a positive force as well (he was less enthusiastic about Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem al Thani.) When asked by SE Gration what the USG could do to help keep the Doha process alive, Bassole asserted the need to expand the talks from a bilateral to a multilateral forum. "Engaging with the other movements is critical," he said, though he reported that there has been little to no progress on the Libyan-facilitated "Unity plus" collection of factions' involvement in the peace process (reftel). Bassole also urged the USG leverage its ties to Minni Minnawi to encourage him to join the Doha talks as part of the GNU. Such an

option is "legal, easy and serves the integrity of the DPA," said Deputy Mediator Azouz Ennifar. "This would give him a platform from which to insist on implementation of the DPA," he added. Bassole noted that while Minnawi was agitated following the fighting in Muhajeriya and subsequent loss of his territories in South Darfur, "he may come around now." He urged the USG to advise Minnawi to pursue this path.

14. (SBU) Bassole and his team told SE Gration that in addition to bringing Minnawi and rival rebel factions to the negotiating table (most notably SLA Unity and JEM), they recognize the need to expand participation in the peace process to a broader spectrum of stakeholders. They are currently exploring ways to work with civil society groups in the course of the mediation, they said. JMST Senior Advisor Kenny Gluck noted that it was unlikely that any negotiated settlement between rebels and the GOS "could produce a stable and viable peace agreement for Darfur, given the number of constituents not at the table." Darfur's Arab communities need a voice, he said, as does Darfur's diverse civil society. Deputy Mediator Ennifar pointed out that the Sudan People's Initiative (SPI) was actually quite positive in convening a broad cross-section of Darfurian society together for healthy debate. "It's a shame it was not continued," he said.

THOUGHTS ON REGIONAL ACTORS

15. (SBU) Bassole told SE Gration that if he was to continue to use Doha as a venue, he would need help placating and sustaining the (constructive) involvement of regional actors, namely Libya and Egypt. If not involved, both have the ability to destabilize the talks, he said, recalling how Egypt purposefully scheduled

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conflicting meetings for Khalil Ibrahim in Cairo to delay his arrival for initial talks in Doha. Recalling the failed peace talks in Sirte, Libya in 2007, Bassole noted that the Libyans were not nearly as organized as the Qataris, but could still play the role of spoiler. Even Eritrea was not without influence, he said, noting that "we need [regional actors] to help, not hinder the process." He urged SE Gration to convey this message in his regional consultations.

LOOKING TO NEXT STEPS IN DOHA

16. (SBU) Asked by SE Gration what other messages he could convey to be helpful, Bassole stated that he appreciated the SE's pragmatic approach of seeking a "technical fix" to fill the gaps left by the NGO expulsions. He urged the Special Envoy to maintain steady engagement with the regime. "The GOS needs to have a feeling that the U.S. is not fighting against them" to elicit constructive behavior, he said. Bassole noted that he is scheduled to meet Khalil Ibrahim in N'Djamena on April 10 and hopes to get the JEM leader to agree to return to Doha soon after for meetings. Any future Doha talks would benefit greatly from SE Gration's presence, he said. "There are so many comments coming out that Doha is dead, so it would be a big boost to have you declare your support for the process and visit," said Deputy Mediator Ennifar, who noted that an announcement of the SE's travel to Doha could spur JEM and other rebel factions to jump back into talks.

17. (SBU) Asked whether he would be prepared to introduce a draft framework at the next iteration of talks in Doha, Bassole noted that there was still considerable work to be done to bridge the gap between the GOS and JEM. "The draft we prepared was accepted by the government but strongly rejected by JEM," he said. When pushed on the tabling of a draft agreement on security arrangements leading towards a cessation of hostilities and eventual ceasefire, Bassole was cautious. "JEM won't agree to this before they agree to a framework," he said, noting that because JEM holds no territory in Darfur, a cessation of hostilities gives them nothing. JMST Advisor Gluck added that "JEM's ace is its ability to launch quick strikes and retreat." Bassole and his team agreed to remain in contact with SE Gration, USSES Shortly and the Embassy to discuss preparations for the next talks in Doha.

18. (SBU) Comment: The absence of any progress in integrating the "Unity Plus" group of rebels' into the Doha process is disappointing, given that a potential ceasefire agreement between them and the GOS remains the easiest (though by no means easy) way to negotiate of present options. The JMST's stance on Minnawi is similarly frustrating, because it fails to recognize the non-implementation of the DPA. In a later meeting with Minnawi, he did not rule out going to Doha, but remained skeptical. For all its flaws in dealing with the various rebel factions, however, the JMST should be lauded for its recognition of the importance of civil society in the peace process, and should be encouraged to leverage the work of UNAMID's Civil Affairs as it seeks to broaden stakeholder participation. Cooperation between the JMST and UNAMID in the course of the mediation should also be demanded, because as the eventual monitor of any potential cessation of hostilities or ceasefire arrangement, UNAMID's participation in its negotiation will be critical to its success.

FERNANDEZ